

Good Stories for Children

BY
WALT McDUGALL.

WHY LITTLE SAMMY SIMPSON DOESN'T BELIEVE IN CRUEL WIZARDS

After One Sad Experience With the Strange Beings, "Simple Sam" Changed His Mind

SAMMY SIMPSON was always called "Simple Sam," because he believed everything that was told to him. Every story he read or heard about fairies, spooks, giants, ogres, wizards, witches and goblins he thought was perfectly true, and consequently he was afraid of the dark, dreaded to be left alone in the house, wouldn't go near a graveyard, or even a church, at night, and had perfect faith in all unlucky signs and omens, such as seeing the new moon over the left shoulder, spilling salt or going under a ladder.

He believed that toads gave boys warts, that rabbits laid eggs at Easter, that storks brought the babies, that dragonflies will sew up your ears and bats get in your hair if they have a chance—in fact, every nonsensical fable that children repeat he gave the utmost credence to. Therefore he was perfectly ready to believe every new tale the other boys told him. None of these things would seem odd for a little child to credit, but Simple Sam was fourteen years old, so he should have known better.

One day his friend, Harry Stone, invited him to go with him to his uncle's farm in the country, but Sam refused promptly because it was Friday, and therefore an unlucky day. This made Harry very angry, and he went away declaring that he would have no more to do with Simple Sam. It certainly was foolish of Sam, and yet, as it turned out, it was far more unlucky for him to have remained at home, for, while the two boys were disputing angrily about the matter, and Sam was declaring again and again that he believed in all sorts of bogies, goblins and wizards, as well as unlucky days and places, neither of them noticed that an old woman—a wicked-looking, ragged old hag—was intently listening to every word and carefully scanning Sam's moonlike and vacant face. When Harry went away she came to Sam and asked:

"Isn't your name Iky Einstein, and don't you live in 29 Oak street?"

"No," replied Simple Sam. "My name is Samuel Simpson, and I live in that big house there—No. 6818 High street."

An Illustration From a Wizard

The old woman mumbled something and went away. Sam instantly suspected, as perhaps you also may have already done, that she was a witch, and he shuddered to think how close she had been to him. He hurried home at once, but soon forgot about the matter. Harry Stone had seen the old woman, whom he knew to be a rag picker, speaking to Sam, but he thought no more about it until afterward, for he was one of those busy boys who are always about the streets seeing and hearing everything, so that little escaped his eye, and he had a deal to attend to.

Sam did not go out again until 'ate' in the afternoon, and had hardly stepped upon the sidewalk, when he was accosted by a tall, thin young man with a bloated, red face and watery eyes, who spoke as if in surprise:

"Hully gee! Ain't dis Sammy Simpson?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy.

"Then you're de very one I'm sent after."

He handed Sam a piece of rather soiled paper, upon which were these strange characters:



Sammy looked at it and turned it upside down, but could make nothing of it. He then inquired:

"What does it mean? I don't understand it at all."

"What! can't you read wizard's writin'?" He told me you'd know all about it."

"Who told you?" asked Simple Sam.

"Why, de wizard, of course."

"I never saw a wizard. Where is he?" inquired Sam.

"Just at dis present moment he's a-sunnin' hisself in the park. Dat writin' is ter invite you ter come and visit him, fer he's taken a powerful fancy ter you. He's goin' to do sumpin' for ye."

In great excitement Sammy cried:

"Let's go to him at once! I'd like to see a real live wizard!"

"All right. You just foller me," said the bleary-eyed young man, and he started at once, followed by the simple boy. On the way the man told Sammy that the wizard's name was Jusippus Pilsner, and



"HOLD YOUR BREATH AS LONG AS YOU CAN"

that he lived in a glass and ivory castle on the top of a high mountain in Holland, but had come all the way to America to see Sam. When they arrived at the park the man suddenly halted, seeing a policeman talking to a nursemaid, and he said to Sam:

"I dassen't approach no nearer to his majesty de wizard Pilsner, so you walk right up to him and tell him who you are. Dat's him a-settin' on the bench near the statue—de old man wid de white wind-teasers—I mean whiskers."

As soon as Sam neared the old wizard the young man slunk away with a broad grin on his face, for the policeman had looked toward him suspiciously.

"Are you the Wizard Pilsner?" asked Sam, trembling slightly when he reached the bench.

The white-whiskered old man, who certainly looked as wicked as any wizard Sam had ever seen in pictures, smiled and replied:

"I am. You received my letetr, then, my good lad?"

"I couldn't read it," stammered Sam.

"What! Couldn't read the summons? And I was told by the Green-eyed Hobgoblin who lives in your cellar that you were a grand past master of magic. He has deceived me! However, now you're here, it don't matter. I sent for you to tell you that you are such a clever boy I want you to be my pupil and learn all sorts of magic. I'll teach you how to fly through the air on a rug and how to become invisible in a jiffy. Want to learn those things?"

"Oh, I surely do!" cried Sam.

"Then, I'll surely learn you," said Pilsner. "We can't talk here, and I think we'd better go somewhere where people can't hear me telling you the secrets of magic."

"Oh, come to our house!" cried Sam.

"Sure nobody will hear us there?" asked the alleged wizard.

"Nobody's at home—not even a servant!" said Sam, "and we'll have the house to ourselves until to-night."

"That'll just suit!" exclaimed Pilsner, smiling, "but I've got a date with an ogre at 4 o'clock, and it's pretty near that now. He'll be sore if I disappoint him."

"Oh, I'd like to see an ogre!" cried Sam. "Can't you show him to me?"

"Not out here," said Pilsner. "Oh, no indeed! But say, suppose I bring him along with me?"

"That would be just the thing. He won't hurt me, will he?" asked Sam.

"Not while I'm by, you bet. But if I was away he'd very likely eat you in a minute. He'll be as nice as a kitten, however, when I tell him who you are. Now, you go home, and I'll go after him and get him, so's we won't lose no time. You ain't got no beer nor anything like that in the house, eh?"

"Yes; all sorts of beer and wine," said Sam. "Does he like wine?"

"Just dotes on it!" cried Pilsner, with intense enthusiasm. "Next to boys' blood he fancies wine, but specially on Fridays. Trot along now, and we'll be there most as soon as you are, sonny."

Thrilling with excitement and curiosity, Sam ran home. He was so wrought up that he forgot his fear of the dark cellar, and went down there quite bravely to get several bottles of his father's best wine for his visitors, and then he awaited their arrival in great anxiety. Suppose, after all, the ogre refused to come or the wizard changed his mind? Perhaps the ogre would think it beneath him to be the guest of a boy as small as he was. Even as this thought was passing through his mind he saw the wizard crossing the street with a large red-headed man, who had enormous hands and feet, and one of whose eyes was blackened. Sam ran to the door and opened it. With a quick jump both men sprang into the hall, and the wizard hastily closed the door.

"This is the ogre, and he ain't got no appetite for boy meat to-day, he says, so you're all right," said the wizard, and the ogre grinned. Sam noticed that he had a strong odor of whisky and tobacco about him, but supposed that of course ogres had other vices than a taste for boys, and was not surprised.

They followed him to the dining room.

Learning the Wizard Spell

"Now, that's what I call treating a wizard and an ogre hospitable!" exclaimed Pilsner when he saw the wine on the table. Both men seized a bottle and had the corks out in a second. When the wine had vanished the wizard said:

"Now, sonny, we're ready to give you your first lesson. But hain't your father got no cigars?"

"There are plenty in the library," replied Sam.

"Then, to the library we goes, and it's the proper place for a wizard." Pilsner's eyes and those of the ogre were swiftly roving all over everything with eager, hungry glances, and more than once Sam saw them finger the silverware on the sideboard. When the cigars were lighted the wizard said: "Now we can begin. First off, you've got to learn the magic password and the secret spell o' wizzing. Take a seat in that there revolving chair. Now repeat after me these awful and mysterious words." When Sam was in the chair Pilsner continued:

"Amico, Mamico, Wozzo Won." Sam repeated the words after him.

"Billico, ballico, Eesy Mon!"

Again Sam followed like an echo.

"Tekory, Jekory, plunny phake. Hank-Panki takes the cake!"

"We have no cake," interrupted Simple Sam, "but there's pie in the pantry."

"I'll go and get it," said the ogre, winking at the wizard, "while you are teaching him the mystic rites." He hurried from the room, but just then the door bell rang and he sprang in again with a frightened air. There was silence for a moment as the two men looked at each other, but both breathed easier as Sam said:

"I'll go to the door and see who it is, but I'll not let anybody in."

He soon returned, saying that it was only a peddler, and then he resumed his seat. The ogre left the room at once.

"Now," said the wizard, "what'll I teach you first? Do you want to learn to call the magic Hoopoo bird,

that'll fly all over the world with you, or will you learn how to be invisible?"

"I don't know," replied Sam. "I guess I'll learn to call the bird first."

"That's a wise kid! Some boys would have wanted to be invisible or learn how to tell what animals have been men or women onct, like your cat."

"Was our cat once a woman?" cried Sam, in awe.

"Cert! A lovely female princess from Frooklyn, and she was changed by an old witch named Mrs. Maria Mooney. I'll show you how to change her back into a gal again this very afternoon. Now, do you s'pose there's an egg in the pantry?"

"I think so," answered Sam.

"Go and get one," said the wizard, as he glanced around the room, "and we'll soon hatch out a Hoopoo bird."

Sam went to the pantry, but much to his surprise, the ogre was not there, nor had he touched the mince pies. On the contrary, as he returned the red face of the ogre appeared over the balustrade on the third floor, and he wondered what he could be doing there. He took the egg to the wizard, who said:

"Ah, that's the real kind. I see the invisible marks on it. There's a Hoopoo in there, sure. Git into the chair again. Now I'll spin you 'round, and while you're spinning you repeat: 'Wheezem, wheezem,' over and over, for that's gum Arabic for Hoopoo bird."

He spun the boy around rapidly in the revolving chair until he was so dizzy that his head reeled and he found it extremely difficult to repeat the magic word—"wheezem" for lack of breath. Then Pilsner stopped the chair, and, handing the egg to Sam, showed him a curious mark upon it, which he had made with a pencil, and said:

"Now, you sit there and hold your breath as long as you can, and never for a second take your eyes off that mark, no matter what happens, or the hull business will be queered. I'll go outside and call up the goblin from the cellar, for I want to tell him a few things."

The Ogre Fell Down Stairs

He left the room, and Sam sat there holding his breath and with his eyes glued to the mark on the egg, expecting momentarily to see a Hoopoo bird crack the shell and emerge from it. He could hear heavy footsteps upstairs, and occasionally things being dropped by the wizard and the ogre, who had finished several additional bottles of wine, and were feeling the effects. But he never removed his gaze from the egg.

At last a tremendous crash, caused by the ogre falling downstairs with an armful of clocks, silverware, cut glass, watches, jewelry and clothing startled Simple Sam, and he looked toward the door. He hastily turned his glance to the egg again, but he realized that the spell had been broken. Thinking to begin all over again, he spun the chair around, repeated "wheezem" again and again, and gazed fixedly at the mark, but the door opened and the wizard entered.

"You've looked away!" he cried. "I see you do it soon as you done it. Now the hull spell is busted! We've got to do something else. Did you hear the

As "Simple Sam" He Had Faith in All the Fairies, Wizards, Spooks, Ogres, Giants, Witches and Other Queer Folk, Though He Was 14 Years Old

ogre a-banging the goblin 'round and throwing him downstairs? Nearly killed poor little hobgoblin!"

"That's what made me look away," said Sam. "The noise was awful."

The wizard took the egg from Sam's hand and held it up to examine it, but he was now so drunk that he allowed it to fall to the floor, where it promptly smashed.

"Huh! It jumped away from me, the sassy thing," he muttered. "You go and get another one—no, you stay here and keep a-spinning, while I get it, so as not to disturb the spell any more than necessary. Just keep a-spinning till I come back."

He was gone a long time, so long that Sam felt sick from the continued spinning, but he persisted, although turning slower and slower. Once the ogre looked in at him, but Sam was so dizzy that he did not see him, but a moment later he heard both of the men laughing most uproariously in the hall, and then the wizard returned. He held an apple in one hand and a bottle in the other, and could scarcely walk straight.

"I've found a magic peach from the Garden o' Paradise that some magician has gone and turned into an ordinary apple, but it didn't fool your Uncle Pilsner a little bit. This here apple is stronger medicine than any old egg, and it'll not only bring the Hoopaloo bird, but make you invisible, too."

He took Sam by the hand and led him to a closet in the library. Opening the closet door, he shoved Sam inside, placed the apple in his hand and said:

"Now, you set down on the floor there, and hold the apple against your stomach. Keep a-saying, 'Geezem, geezem,' all the time, and when the apple begins to wobble and tries to git away from you, just holler for me, but don't open your mouth to (hie!) speak unless it does. Remember (hie!) if you say one word the whole business is spoiled, and we don't see no skoop-(hie!)-alorum bird! I'll be right out in the hall with the goblin a-waiting for you to call me."

Captured by Policemen

He closed the door upon Sam, who held the wonderful apple clutched tightly, and then the wizard staggered to the hall, where he assisted the ogre in selecting the most valuable treasures he had piled up there in a heap. The silverware was packed in dress suit cases, the clocks and other easily removed articles in pillow cases, while the ogre and wizard had put on the best clothes belonging to Sam's father, and in their pockets placed all the watches, rings, bracelets and other jewelry belonging to both his parents.

It was almost dark, and they were only waiting for night to come, when the bleary-eyed young man would arrive and help them carry away the plunder to the house of the old woman who had overheard Simple Sam telling about Friday being unlucky.

"We might as well take a short nap," said the ogre, with a vacant smile, "for Tapioca Bill won't be here till seven o'clock."

"That's so," said the wizard, "and I reckon that apple won't begin to wobble before then, as it's now only 6 by the kid's daddy's gold watch and chain. This woody-wizzing makes me very tired!"

They stretched themselves comfortably on the parlor sofas, but suddenly the door bell rang again. Both sprang up in alarm, and then wizard Pilsner ran for Sam and told him to open the door, but not to admit anybody. Sam was disgusted to think that he would have to begin all over again with the spell, but he hurried to the door. He was astonished to see all the things scattered about the hall, but when he opened the door he was simply amazed to see six big policemen, with Harry Stone behind them, standing there. They walked in, and for about two minutes it sounded as if ten lunatic asylums were playing foot-ball, but at the end of that time the ogre and the wizard, who were well known to the police as "Big Ike Handy" and "Slippery Pilsner," looking as though they had been going around a loop-the-loop on their faces, were handcuffed and taken to the station.

Harry Stone had seen Simple Sam walking to the park with Tapioca Bill, and saw him meet the wizard. Then he had followed him and the ogre to the house. After that all he had to do was to tell his Uncle Mike, who is chief of police, what he suspected, and the chief did the rest.

Strange to say, Sam no longer believes in spooks, wizards, ogres or fairies, and can even go into the darkest cellar without fear of meeting any goblins or bogies, and, in fact, he even considers Friday a lucky day, for that's the day he was cured of his silly beliefs and ceased to be Simple Sam Simpson. Now he's as sensible as you or I.

WALT McDUGALL.

